

***Penstemon deustus* Dougl. ex Lindl.**
var. *variabilis* (Suksd.) Cronq.
hot-rock penstemon
Scrophulariaceae (Figwort Family)

Status: State Threatened

Rank: G5T1T2S1S2

General Description: Plants 8-24 inches tall, more or less woody toward the much-branched base, the stems of the season mostly simple and erect; leaves, or some of them frequently ternate, or quaternate, or scattered, all narrow and irregularly few-toothed to entire, often subpetiolate, more than 5 times as long as wide and not more than ¼ inch wide; inflorescence loose; staminode more often bearded than glabrous; sepals ⅛ to ¼ inch long, lanceolate to oval, the margins entire and scarious (white); corolla commonly dull white with some purplish guide-lines within, ⅓ to ¾ inch long, the tube not much expanded in the throat, the upper lip shorter than the lower; anthers spreading widely to opposite, the sacs dehiscing flat, glabrous, <1/16 inch long and mostly included within the corolla.

Identification Tips: *Penstemon deustus* var. *deustus* occurs within the same range as *P. deustus* var. *variabilis*. The leaves of var. *variabilis* are narrower and frequently whorled or scattered with few to no teeth on the margins whereas var. *deustus* has opposite leaves which are evidently toothed. Also the staminode of var. *variabilis* is more often bearded than glabrous where the staminode in var. *deustus* is more often glabrous than bearded.

Phenology: Blooms in June and July.

Range: Regional endemic; Klickitat County, WA to Deschutes, Grant, and Umatilla counties, OR. Occurs within the Columbia Basin physiographic province.

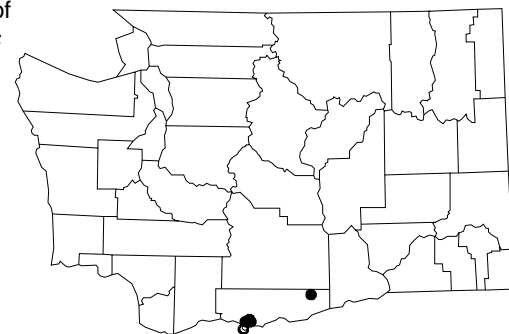
Habitat: Dry foothills and lowlands. In WA, the taxon is found on open, dry, thin soils over basalt. The elevation ranges from 1800 to 2600 feet. Associated species include bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), northern buckwheat (*Eriogonum compositum*), woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*), milk-vetch (*Astragalus* spp.), common tarweed (*Madia gracilis*), large-flowered collomia (*Collomia grandiflora*), and Hall's goldenweed (*Happlopappus hallii*). There

Penstemon deustus* var. *variabilis
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Known distribution of
Penstemon deustus
var. *variabilis* in
Washington



- Current (1980+)
- Historic (older than 1980)

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Photo by WNHP



Photo by WNHP

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Habitat (continued): is a lack of a distinctive shrub component to the sites in WA that harbor this taxon.

Ecology: Past heavy grazing activity within the range of this taxon in WA has led to changes in vegetation composition, particularly an increase in weedy annuals. Fires periodically occur within the habitat types occupied by this taxon, but its response to fire is unknown.

State Status Comments: Regional endemic with only a few known populations. *Penstemon deustus* var. *variabilis* is on the very northern edge of its range within southern Klickitat County, WA. The limited number of populations and total number of individuals are the primary factors responsible for the taxon's status.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed in Klickitat County in appropriate habitats.

Threats and Management Concerns: Conversion of habitat, heavy grazing pressure, competition with weedy species, herbicide applications, and road maintenance are threats to this taxon.

References:

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1959. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 4: Ericaceae through Campanulaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 510 pp.